

**Mimi Findlay
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March 9, 2015

Sen. John Fonfara, Co-Chair
Rep/ Jeffrey Berger, Co-Chair
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2E
Hartford, CT 06106

Senate Bill No. 946
Section 29

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

I am speaking today from my personal experience as trustee and volunteer of numerous historic preservation organizations in Connecticut over the past half century. Currently there are two organizations on whose boards I sit, and we are very concerned about the proposed SB No. 946 proposal to remove the Community Investment Act Funds from their special separate, protected account and to sweep them into the general revenue stream.

These CIA preservation funds stimulate the local economy and help local communities protect and preserve their heritage, thus safe-guarding the unique character of our state for future generations.

1) As a board member of the Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum of Norwalk, Inc I encouraged the use of CIA funds, awarded by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) competitive grant process, for the installation of an elevator and public bathroom upgrades. The project was developed in order to satisfy the ADA requirements for public touring of the upper floors of this 1868 National Historic Landmark, one of the most significant structures in the State of Connecticut. Even with the help of this major grant from the State Historic Preservation Office with CIA funds, and from the City of Norwalk and from private funding, the \$1million dollar project has recently been able to complete

only the first half, Phase 1, of the total project. This project provided jobs to Connecticut contractors, architects, craftsmen, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters, suppliers etc. and much of the funding re-circulated throughout community. As a result, now a

much larger public will be attracted to enjoy this educational facility, while we search for ways to fund Phase 2.

Parenthetically, the Museum has also applied for partial funding of its proposed fall exhibition "Below the Stairs: the Servants' View 1865-1930" from Connecticut Humanities, which the Governor's proposed budget plans to eliminate completely; if that happens there will be no fall exhibit at the Museum.

2) In 2007 I saw a need in my community and founded the New Canaan Preservation Alliance Inc. to try to stem the wave of "tear-downs" in my town before the entire architectural history of New Canaan vanished. We started planning our Historic Resources Inventory in 2009, with funding from the CIA account through the State Historic Preservation Office. We are continuing with our third grant to create the comprehensive architectural and historical survey-inventory of New Canaan, with about 1,000 pre World War II properties listed thus far. As it is a State goal to have the State inventoried, we would like to be able to complete the town survey (HRI) but we do not have the funds to continue to do this professionally without the CIA moneys from the SHPO.

3) As a member of the Advisory Board the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation (CTHP) I urge you to prevent a 100% cut to its Maintenance and Repair grants or its Technical Assistance grants. These funds encourage local preservation projects resulting in jobs, increased property value and preservation of historic buildings for new uses for downtown revitalization and the encouragement of tourism. Since April last year, the CTHP re-granted from the Community Investment Act Historic Preservation Funds about \$3,960,00.

4) As former Director of the Wilton Historical Society I am aware of the 2008 conservation project, the Keiser Family Land Easement program to protect the Norwalk River north of Cannondale, funded by the Community Investment Act Open Space Account.

In conclusion, as the Hartford Current's editorial correctly noted on April 11, 2014 "The CIA was one of the most far-sighted laws passed (in 2005) by the General Assembly in recent memory. It is up to the current General Assembly

to protect this fund from poaching" ... The fund's protectors should be every legislator "who is interested in the State's quality of life" as it "funds virtually all the historic preservation activities in the state.... The law also has what has turned out to be an effective structure — it funds categories rather than earmarks. This encourages competition for funds based on the quality of the project."

I urge you to **eliminate the proposed revision** to Section 29 as stated in (b) – "The funds in the Community Investment Account...shall be distributed every three months to the General Fund."

Sincerely

Mimi Findlay

Board Member, Lockwood-Mathews Mansion Museum of Norwalk Inc
Honorary Chair and Board Member, New Canaan Preservation Alliance Inc
Advisor, Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

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Cc Patsy Brescia President, Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum

Cc Susan Gilgore, Executive Director, Lockwood Mathews Mansion Museum